

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

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R 040823Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9819

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

USCINCEUR

COMIDEASTFOR

JCS WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 2277

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: BA, PFOR, MARR

SUBJ: FUTURE OF MIDEASTFOR IN BAHRAIN

REF: MANAMA 0318

SUMMARY: GOB FONMIN TOLD AMBASSADOR JUNE 3 THAT NOTWITHSTANDING SYRIAN-ISRAELI DISENGAGEMENT, PROBLEM OF MIDEASTFOR REMAINING IN BAHRAIN WAS VERY DIFFICULT SINCE GULF AREA STATES UNENCOURAGING, AND BAHRAINI PUBLIC AND ASSEMBLY OPINION GENERALLY NEGATIVE. IT NOW CLEAR, HE SAID, THAT AT VERY LEAST MEF AGREEMENT WOULD HAVE TO BE RADICALLY CHANGED; MEANWHILE MEF WITHDRAWAL NOTICE STILL STOOD. AMBASSADOR CONVINCED THAT US MUST DO SOME URGENT THINKING RE POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR MEF. CMEF HANKS ADVISES THAT CRUCIAL DECISIONS SHOULD BE MADE IN JUNE, 1974. END SUMMARY

1. IN FAREWELL CALL ON BAHRAINI FONMIN MUHAMED MUBARAK JUNE 3 I REMARKED NOW THAT SYRIAN-ISRAELI DISENGAGEMENT ACCOMPLISHED
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(FONMIN HAD BEEN ECSTATIC OVER SECRETARY KISSINGER'S MOST RECENT

SUCCESS), PROSPECTS FOR RESCISSION OF GOB WITHDRAWAL NOTICE ON MIDEASTFOR PRESUMABLY HAD BRIGHTENED. WHAT WAS CURRENT STATUS THIS MATTER?

2. FONMIN REPLIED SUBJECT OF REQUEST FOR WITHDRAWAL OF MIDEASTFOR MUST BE TREATED IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE, NOT SIMPLY IN CONTEXT OCTOBER WAR OR SITUATION ON ARAB-ISRAELI FRONT. MIDEASTFOR AGREEMENT HAD COME INTO FORCE INAUSPICIOUSLY WITH PUBLIC HULLABALOO IN US CONGRESS AND PRESS ABOUT US "BASE" IN BAHRAIN. GOB STILL SMARTING FROM THIS EMBARRASSMENT. GOB HAD THEN SOUGHT SUPPORT FOR MIDEASTFOR PRESENCE IN BAHRAIN FROM SAUDI ARABIA, IRAN, KUWAIT AND OTHER GULF STATES. NOT EVEN IRAN HAD GIVEN RINGING ENDORSEMENT WHILE KUWAIT HAD OFFERED GIVE BAHRAIN AMOUNT EQUIVALENT TO THE MIDEASTFOR RENTAL FEE. NOW NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, CREATED SINCE THE MIDEASTFOR AGREEMENT CONCLUDED, HAD TO BE CONTENTED WITH. AND HIS READING OF MOOD OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, FONMIN SAID, WAS THAT "NOT ONE QUARTER" OF ASSEMBLY WOULD VOTE FOR RESCISSION.

3. FONMIN SAID PROBLEM WAS EXCEEDINGLY DIFFICULT ONE FOR GOB. BAHRAIN WAS VERY SMALL ISLAND. A FEW WISE SOULS UNDERSTOOD LONG-RANGE, BASIC BENEFIT TO BAHRAIN OF US NAVY PRESENCE, BUT BIG MAJORITY DID NOT. GOB WANTED TO COME TO SOME ACCOMMODATION WITH USG RE NAVY PRESENCE IN BAHRAIN BUT IT HAD BECOME CLEAR THAT A VERY LEAST MIDEASTFOR AGREEMENT WOULD HAVE TO BE RADICALLY CHANGED INCLUDING PRESENT CRIMINAL JURISDICTION ARRANGEMENTS. FONMIN SAID, IN VIEW CURRENT POLITICAL CLIMATE IN BAHRAIN, HE DID NOT SEE HOW OCTOBER 20 DATE COULD BE FINESSED OR MUDDLED THROUGH. IN MEANTIME SITUATION WAS THAT GOB NOTICE REQUIRING MIDEASTFOR TO WITHDRAW BY OCTOBER 20, 1974 STILL STOOD.

4. COMMENT: AS DEPT WILL HAVE NOTED FROM PREVIOUS REPORTING, FONMIN AND RULER SHAIKH ISA DIFFER WIDELY IN THEIR RESPECTIVE ASSESSMENTS OF POLITICAL ACCEPTABILITY IN BAHRAIN OF MIDEASTFOR, SHAIKH ISA TENDING BELIEVE "THERE WILL BE NO PROBLEM". I AM CONVINCED FONMIN HAS HIS EAR CLOSER TO GROUND, AND THAT UNLESS WE DO SOME NEW THINKING PROMPTLY ON POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR NAVY IN BAHRAIN, AND OPEN FRANK DIALOGUE WITH GOB SOONEST, WE COULD WELL FIND OURSELVES IN EMBARRASSING
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CRUNCH THIS OCTOBER. WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME TO LOSE.
COMIDEASTFOR ADM HANKS TELLS ME CRUCIAL DECISIONS ONE WAY OR OTHER SHOULD BE MADE THIS MONTH (JUNE).
STOLTZFUS

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